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ABSTRACT

The study guide accompanies a series of 28 videotaped programs designed to provide teachers, teacher aides and parents with an understanding of children with autistic tendencies and of how behavior modification techniques might be used to train such children. Synopses of each program and each program segment and a few questions intended to stimulate the reader's consideration of the topics are presented for demonstrations of autistic behaviors (such as echolalia and perserveration), of techniques (such as use of positive reinforcers), and for three case studies. (LS)

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BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

FOR

CHILDREN WITH AUTISTIC TENDENCIES

Study Guide For

A Videotaped Series

Prepared by:

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and
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September, 1974

Project Director - Elizabeth L. Ayre

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This Study Guide accompanies a series of videotapes which are designed to provide the learner (pre-service and in-service teachers, teacher aides and parents) with an understanding of children with autistic tendencies and how behavior modification techniques might be used to train such children. The videotape series consists of twenty-eight programs: fourteen not narrated (Form A) and fourteen narrated (Form B). Each program contains several clips of footage taken of children with autistic-like behaviors. The following is a list of programs.

A. Characteristic Behaviors

- A. 1. Echolalia and Perseveration
- A. 2. Screaming
- A. 3. Gestures
- A. 4. Inattention
- A. 5. Reacting To Others

B. Techniques

- B. 1. Reinforcers #1
- B. 2. Reinforcers #2
- B. 3. Reinforcers #3
- B. 4. Labeling Contingency #1
- B. 5. Labeling Contingency #2
- B. 6. Handling Bad Behavior

C. Case Studies

- C. 1. Wayne
- C. 2. Frankie #1
- C. 3. Frankie #2

The truly autistic child is one who escapes reality and lives in a fantasy world of his own. He usually displays self-stimulating behaviors such as twirling objects (a dish, an ashtray, a ball, etc.). He never responds to his name; does not use pronouns if he uses speech at all. He often refers to himself as an inanimate object when he uses speech. He does not recognize authority figures. Often times he resorts to screaming behaviors, tantrum behaviors and bizarre hand, eye, or head movements. There are many children who have autistic tendencies that might display any or all of these. However, each child fits somewhere along the continuum from the truly autistic to the normal child and, of course, the teacher has to be aware of what's going on in an attempt to change behaviors as they appear.

The children shown in these clips were taking part in behavior modification training programs at the Wildwood School in Schenectady, New York and Children's Hospital in Buffalo, New York. Both of those programs were designed to test the effectiveness of behavior modification in social settings involving more than one child at a time. In some of the clips, the teacher works only with one child so as to provide some comparisons between the two settings.

This study guide has been designed to provide the reader with a brief synopsis of each program and each segment of each program. It also includes a few questions for each program which are intended to stimulate the reader's consideration of the topics covered by the programs.

Thanks are extended to the following persons for their cooperation in this project: Edward Acee, Elizabeth Boepple, Kenneth Cross, Delores Finkbiner, Richard Forsey, Claire Hooley, Michael Machado, John Murray, Shirley Reynolds, Virginia Russick, Arthur Schaeffer, Elaine Walter.

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A. 1. CHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIORS -- ECHOLALIA AND PERSEVERATION

TIME: 11:50 minutes

The child with autistic-like behaviors frequently repeats a word immediately after someone else says it (echolalia) and sometimes repeats persistently non-sensical words and actions (perseveration).

SEGMENT #1. (3:15 minutes) As Claire works with Jimmy and Raymond, Jimmy first perseverates on the word "ball" and later on the word "Frisbee". Note also that Raymond echoes his name when the teacher addresses him.

SEGMENT #2. (4:25 minutes) Dickie perseverates on the words "Lucy Ball" when Elaine shows him a picture of a ball. This perseveration is repeated several times throughout the clip. Michael perseverates on "daddy's boots"

SEGMENT #3. (3:35 minutes) Wayne is deeply involved in bead stringing. This can become perseveration if it is continued when new task commands are introduced. Roddy perseverates on non-sense syllables.

QUESTIONS:

1. Cite examples of echolalia and perseveration in the clips in this program and in other instances with which you are familiar
2. Explain the difference between echolalia and perseveration.
3. How might a teacher deal with echolalia and perseveration?
4. Comment on each segment.

A. 2. CHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIORS -- SCREAMING

TIME: 3:45 minutes

One of the characteristic behaviors of children with autistic-like tendencies is that they scream frequently, especially in response to attempts by the authority figure to impose direction on their activities. The clips in this program demonstrate this characteristic.

SEGMENT #1. (50 seconds) When Claire attempts to impose direction, Jimmy reacts with antagonism and screaming.

SEGMENT #2. (30 seconds) Frankie screams when Claire and Art attempt to get him to execute a simple command.

SEGMENT #3. (1:45 minutes) Jimmy screams when he doesn't get his way and strikes out at Roddy because Roddy wants to share some of the balls with Jimmy.

QUESTIONS:

1. How is screaming typical behavior for children with autistic-like tendencies?
2. How might the teacher deal with screaming?
3. Comment on each segment.

A. 3. CHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIORS -- GESTURES

TIME: 6:20 minutes

Children with autistic-like tendencies frequently demonstrate behaviors which are recognizable by the trained observer. These clips illustrate some of the gestures which characterize such children.

SEGMENT #1. (1:25 minutes) As Raymond achieves some degree of success in the task he is working on, he steps back to admire the tower which he is building and in his excitement starts jumping up and down and waving his hands.

SEGMENT #2. (2:15 minutes) Raymond lapses into whining and finally gives in to a full tantrum.

SEGMENT #3. (2:40 minutes) In addition to perseveration, Dickie exhibits self-stimulating activity, followed by the tendency to go limp, sometimes accompanied by interspersed hand clapping.

QUESTIONS:

1. What types of gestures are characteristic of children with autistic-like behaviors?
2. How might the teacher deal with typical gestures?
3. Comment on each segment.

A. 4. CHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIORS -- INATTENTION

TIME: 6:05 minutes

One characteristic of children with autistic-like behaviors is that they tend to exclude the surrounding environment or portion of it from their conscious realm. The clips in this program demonstrate examples of the inattentiveness of children with autistic-like tendencies.

SEGMENT #1. (1:40 minutes) Wayne and Roddy are both fairly involved in their tasks. However, they seem quite inattentive to others in their environment.

SEGMENT #2. (35 seconds) As Elaine works with Michelle and Michael, Michelle seems to be making a conscious effort to avoid while Michael seems completely oblivious of the surrounding environment.

SEGMENT #3. (3:20 minutes) Wayne and Julius are both on task and completely absorbed in their work. They are also fairly unconscious of the other's presence until a loud noise breaks their concentration.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some ways in which children exhibit inattention?
2. How might the teacher deal with inattention?
3. Comment on each segment.

A. 5. CHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIORS -- REACTING TO OTHERS

TIME: 9:35 minutes

Children with autistic-like tendencies frequently react to others by ignoring them or, in some cases, with open hostility. These clips provide examples of some typical reactions of children with autistic-like behaviors.

SEGMENT #1. (2:20 minutes) When Claire works with Wayne and Frankie, Wayne at first fights the attention of the teacher then settles into his task for as long as Frankie is attending to his (Frankie's) task. As soon as Frankie goes off task, Wayne follows his lead. For the most part, Frankie works on task until the teacher attends to him, then he reacts with annoyance.

SEGMENT #2. (3:50 minutes) As Elaine works with Michelle, Nicky rocks and ignores the interaction between Elaine and Michelle. Michelle rejects any attempts by Elaine to structure the learning situation.

SEGMENT #3. (2:55 minutes) At first, Wayne is very attentive to Claire and to the tasks which she is structuring for him but with the passage of time, he ignores her commands and tests her endurance with off-task behavior.

QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways do the children react to each other? To the teacher?
2. How might the teacher promote more acceptable social behaviors?
3. Comment on each segment.

B. 1. TECHNIQUES -- REINFORCERS #1

TIME: 9:35 minutes

In this program you will see clips of teachers working with children who have been diagnosed as having autistic-like tendencies. Some clips show the teacher working with two children, others show the teacher working with one child. The clips were selected to demonstrate various ways in which reinforcers are used to train young children with autistic-like tendencies. Narration on Form B of the tapes indicates which of the techniques should be avoided in working with children with autistic-like tendencie

SEGMENT #1. (2 minutes) Elaine teaches Kevin and Michael a task which is designed to improve their abilities to label colors.

SEGMENT #2. (2:55 minutes) Claire works with Wayne to establish "attending" behavior. He is rewarded for putting his hands on the table and looking at Claire.

SEGMENT #3. (1:12 minutes) Elaine works with Michael and Dickie on an exercise in labeling colors and using crayons.

SEGMENT #4. (1:40 minutes) Claire attempts to improve Frankie's attending behaviors and response to simple commands. A drinking bottle is used as a reinforcer.

SEGMENT #5. (1:38 minutes) Claire teaches Frankie and Jimmy an exercise involving labeling through the use of puzzles. She interrupts her work with Jimmy frequently to chase Frankie around the room.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who does the most talking in the segments, teacher or children?

2. What is the nature of the learning environment? What elements are in it?

3. What is the target behavior for each segment? What is the "reinforcer" for each?

4. How is inappropriate behavior reinforced?

5. Comment on each segment.

B. 2. TECHNIQUES -- REINFORCERS #2

TIME. 13:05 minutes

In this program you will see clips of teachers working with children who have been diagnosed as having autistic-like tendencies. Some clips show the teacher working with two children, others show the teacher working with one child. The clips were selected to demonstrate various ways in which reinforcers are used to train young children with autistic-like tendencies. Narration on Form B of the tapes indicates which of the techniques should be avoided in working with children with autistic-like tendencies.

SEGMENT #1. (3:00 minutes) Claire engages Roddy and Raymond in play activities using Play-Doh. Raymond wanders over to the television monitor and the teacher seizes on that as a future reinforcer.

SEGMENT #2. (3:00 minutes) Elaine uses tactile involvement to teach Michelle and Nicky the shape and labels for couch, table and chair.

SEGMENT #3. (1:30 minutes) Elaine teaches labels for fire engine and school bus and the numbers on both of those vehicles as illustrated in the book.

SEGMENT #4. (4:35 minutes) Claire works with Frankie on developing his attending behavior ("look at me"). She effectively ignores inappropriate behavior.

SEGMENT #5. (1.00 minute) Claire works with Raymond and Wayne on several activities involving puzzles and games. Wayne becomes interested in the television and Claire promises him an opportunity to look at it after he accomplishes the task before him.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many tasks are there for each segment?
2. How many reinforcers are used in each segment?
3. Which types of reinforcers seem to be most effective?
4. Comment on each segment.

B. 3. TECHNIQUES -- REINFORCERS #3

TIME: 12:50 minutes

In this pair of clips, Frankie, who has been diagnosed as having autistic-like tendencies, is led to perform a series of tasks involving verbalization. In each case, the reinforcer is the child's mother. In order to get to his mother, he must perform the assigned task, saying "Mommy" or "Get up, please, Art". This is a significant task because, according to Frankie's mother, he has never addressed people by name. The segments illustrate the need for endurance and consistency on the part of the teacher.

SEGMENT #1. (3:50 minutes) Art works with Frankie to get him to say "Get up, please, Art". He is permitted to pass by Art to his mother when, and only when, Frankie says the phrase.

SEGMENT #2. (9:00 minutes) There are two parts to this segment. In the first part, Frankie watches his mother on the TV screen and must say "Mommy" in order to get to her. In the second part, his mother stands behind Art and Frankie must say "Mommy" in order to get to her.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many tasks are there in each segment?
2. Comment on the strength of the reinforcer.
3. Does Frankie's behavior indicate anything about how he is usually reinforced?
4. Comment on the segments in general.

B. 4. TECHNIQUES -- LABELING CONTINGENCY #1

TIME: 7:20 minutes

The purpose of this series of clips is to demonstrate the need to identify the target behaviors which are expected of the children and the reward which will be given for performing the expected behaviors. Both the target behavior and the reward should be made known to the child.

SEGMENT #1. (4:00 minutes) Claire uses two primary reinforcers (drink of soda pop and a token) in working with Roddy and Raymond on targets which are clearly labeled. The cluttered environment, however, provides the children with distractions which are difficult to overcome.

SEGMENT #2. (1:30 minutes) This clip demonstrates how powerful a person can be as a reinforcer. Art clearly labels for Frankie the fact that he can have passage to his mother if he says the word "Mommy".

SEGMENT #3. (1:50 minutes) Claire works with Wayne and Jimmy in a situation in which the tasks are not as well defined as they might be.

QUESTIONS:

1. Are the target behaviors clearly defined?
2. How might the contingencies be better defined by the teacher?
3. Comment on the strength of the reward used in each segment.
4. Comment on each segment.

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B. 5. TECHNIQUES -- LABELING CONTINGENCY #1

TIME: 13:45 minutes

These clips illustrate the need to provide positive reward for on-task behavior at intermittent intervals.

SEGMENT #1. (9:00 minutes) Claire makes effective use of social contingencies with Frankie and Julius but does not provide enough reward for on-task behavior at intermittent intervals.

SEGMENT #2. (35 seconds) Elaine provides a non-contingent reward when she allows John to have the cereal bowl without saying the word "bowl".

SEGMENT #3. (4:10 minutes) Wayne receives reinforcement for returning to the table but does not receive reinforcement at regular intervals for staying at the table. Therefore, he is more prone to leave the table and return in order to get reinforcement.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the contingencies and rewards in each segment?
2. How could the teacher encourage more on-task behavior?
3. Comment on each segment.

B. 6. TECHNIQUES -- HANDLING BAD BEHAVIOR

TIME: 12:15 minutes

These clips illustrate techniques used by a teacher in dealing with bad and inappropriate behavior.

SEGMENT #1. (6:50 minutes) This clip demonstrates the difficulty of dealing with two children at the same time. Claire attempts to ignore bad behavior and reward positive behaviors. However, because of the presence of two children, the timing of the rewards is sometimes inappropriate.

SEGMENT #2. (3:45 minutes) Again, Claire attempts to handle bad behavior by ignoring it and using strong reinforcers for positive behavior.

SEGMENT #3. (1:10 minutes) When working with only one child, Claire can afford to ignore inappropriate behavior by "going limp" and waiting out the child.

QUESTIONS:

1. What happens when a teacher is working with more than one child and a child exhibits inappropriate behavior? What does the teacher tend to do? How do the other children tend to react?

2. What are some techniques for handling inappropriate behavior when working with only one child?

3. Comment on each segment.

C. 1. CASE STUDY -- WAYNE

TIME: 12:25 minutes

In these clips you will see how simple behavior modification techniques are put to use with Wayne. From the point of gathering baseline data to working on attending behaviors and multiple target behaviors, you will watch the teacher give a series of commands and be consistent in her expectations for performance of those commands.

SEGMENT #1. (2:30 minutes) In this clip, the teacher gathers baseline data concerning Wayne's capabilities and current level of development by giving him simple vocal and motor commands (such as; sit in chair, hands on table, say "Mama"). Using the data gathered, the teacher will determine the training program which aims at basic objectives which are appropriate to Wayne's capabilities and needs.

SEGMENT #2. (7:00 minutes) Claire is concentrating on improving Wayne's attending behaviors. She reinforces positive behavior and ignores negative behavior. Note the increase in desired behaviors when a strong contigent is introduced. Also, note the introduction of social praise as a secondary reinforcer.

SEGMENT #3. (1:50 minutes) Wayne is able to alternate effectively between two target behaviors (hands on table, hands in air). Note that his testing the teacher by waiting her out before complying with her commands.

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SEGMENT # 4. (1:05 minutes) Claire again demonstrates the need to walk out and ignore off-task behaviors.

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you know about Wayne? His needs? His capabilities?
2. What type of a training program would you recommend for Wayne?
3. Comment on each segment.

C. 2. CASE STUDY -- FRANKIE #1

TIME: 7:00 minutes

The room in which these exercises were conducted has been kept stark purposely so as to avoid or at least minimize distractions for the child. Despite this conscious effort, Frankie manages, on occasion to find sources of distraction. Throughout these clips, one is impressed by Frankie's intelligence and his determination not to give in to the structure which has been determined by the teacher (Claire).

SEGMENT #1. (1:30 minutes) Claire attempts to have Frankie respond to simple verbal commands in order to establish baseline data concerning his capabilities and level of development. Note the starkness of the room.

SEGMENT #2. (30 seconds) The target behavior in this segment is "hands on table". The reinforcer is raisins. However, this proves to be ineffective since Frankie had just eaten a full meal and is non-responsive to the raisins.

SEGMENT #3. (5:00 minutes) Now the bottle is introduced as a reinforcer to get Frankie to respond to simple commands. It proves to be a strong reinforcer but ineffective since every time it is taken away, his behavior deteriorates, thereby defeating the accomplishments of the training program. Throughout the series of commands (hands on table, hands up, pound the table, clap your hands) Frankie is able

to carry out the activities but does not alternate easily from one to the other.

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you know about Frankie? His capabilities? His limitations?
2. Comment on each segment.

C. 3. CASE STUDY -- FRANKIE #2

TIME: 9:00 minutes

In these clips, one is impressed by the varying effectiveness of different reinforcers.

SEGMENT #1. (4:30 minutes) The teacher uses cereal (Lucky Charms) to develop Frankie's attending behavior (Look At me) and his ability to assign proper vocalizations (Lucky Charms, Nose).

Note that in order to accomplish the "Look At Me" command the teacher holds the Lucky Charms near her eyes. Also note that when Frankie wanders from the table to the videotape recorder, he counts the revolutions of the videotape recorder counting from one to twenty with a high degree of accuracy. This illustrates a high degree of intelligence.

SEGMENT #2. (3:30 minutes) In this clip the target behavior is correct vocalization (doughnut, please; get up please, Art) the reinforcer is the doughnut in the first instance, and access to Frankie's mother is the second instance.

SEGMENT #3. (30 seconds) Again, the target behavior is correct vocalization (outside, please) and the reinforcer is access to the door.

QUESTIONS:

1. What rewards seem to be most effective with Frankie?
2. What type of training program would you recommend for Frankie?
3. Comment on each segment.